

THE LIMA READER

HISTORY, CULTURE, POLITICS



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HISTORY, CULTURE, POLITICS

Carlos Aguirre and Charles F. Walker, editors

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A todos los limeños y limeñas de ayer y de hoy,
y especialmente a Carlos, Susana, María y Samuel,
nuestros limeños más queridos.

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Lima, aire que tiene una leve pátina de moho cortesano,
tiempo que es una cicatriz en la dulce mirada popular,
lámpara antigua que reconozco en las tinieblas, ¿cómo eres?

Lima, air with a slight patina of courtly mold,
time which is a scar in the people's sweet gaze,
ancient lamp that I recognize in the dark, what are you?

—Sebastián Salazar Bondy

Translated by Charles F. Walker

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Chronicle of Lima

by Antonio Cisneros

“To allay the doubt
that grows tempestuously,
remember me, Hermelinda,
remember me.”

(“Hermelinda,” popular Peruvian song)

Here are recorded my birth and marriage, the death
of grandfather Cisneros and grandfather Campoy.
Here too is recorded the best of my works, a boy and beautiful.
All the roofs and monuments remember my battles against the
King of the Dwarfs and the dogs
in their fashion celebrate the memory of my remorse.

I was also
fed up with the base wines and without a trace of shame or
modesty was master
of the Ceremony of the Frying.

Oh city
maintained by the skulls and customs of kings who were
the dullest and ugliest of their time.

What was lost or gained between these waters?
I try to remember the names of the heroes, of the great traitors.
Remember me, Hermelinda, remember me.

The mornings are a little colder,
but you'll never be certain of the seasons
—it's almost three centuries since they chopped down the woods
and the fields were destroyed by fire.

The sea's close, Hermelinda,
but you can never be sure of its rough waters, its presence
save for the rust on the windows,

the broken masts,
immobile wheels
and the brick-red air.

But the sea's very close
and the horizon extended and suave.

Think of the world
as a half-sphere—half-an-orange, for example—on 4 elephants,
on the 4 columns of Vulcan,

and the rest is fog.
A white furry veil protects you from the open sky.
You should see

4 19th century houses,
9 churches from the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries,
for 2½ *soles*, a catacomb too
where nobles bishops and lords—their wives and children—
shed their hides.

The Franciscans
inspired by some chapel in Rome—so the guide'll tell you—
converted the tough ribs into dahlias, daisies and forget-me-nots
—*remember, Hermelinda*—the shinbones and skulls into Florentine
arches.

(And the jungle of cars, a sexless snake of no known species
beneath the red traffic-lights)

There's also a river.
Ask about it, and they'll tell you that this year it's dried up. Praise
its potential waters, have faith in them.

On the sandy hills
barbarians from the south and east have built
a camp that's bigger than the whole city, and they have other gods.
(Arrange some convenient alliance.)

This air—they'll tell you—
turns everything red and ruins most things after the briefest
contact.

Thus your desires and efforts
will become a rusty needle
before their hair or head have emerged.

And this mutation—*remember, Hermelinda*—doesn't depend upon
anyone's will.

The sea revolves in channels of air,
the sea revolves,
it is the air.

You cannot see it.

But I was at the quayside in Barranco
picking out round flat pebbles to skim across the water.
I had a girl with slim legs. And a job.
And this memory, pliant as a pontoon-bridge, anchors me
to the things I've done
and the infinite number of things left undone,
to my good or bad luck, to things I've neglected.

To what was lost or gained between

these waters.

Remember, Hermelinda, remember me.

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Introduction

Lima is a vibrant, multiracial city with over 8 million people. Reflecting Peru's centuries-old centralism, it continues to attract migrants from throughout Peru seeking economic and educational opportunities, and it now holds more than a quarter of the country's population. This includes the very rich, who live in well-protected gated communities; the ever-insecure middle class; and the multitudes of working poor, who live in the tenements in the city center, in partitioned-off houses, and in the "new towns" that ring the city in every direction, the Pacific Ocean being the only barrier. The city stretches well over sixty miles north to south and continues to expand. In recent years, coinciding with a period of relative economic and political stability, it has become a hot international tourist destination, famed for its colonial architecture and, more recently, for its creative and diverse culinary offerings.

Limeño/as can be and are of indigenous, African, European, Asian, or, more frequently, mixed descent, but each of these categories has its own complexity. "Indigenous" refers to Quechua, Aymara, dozens of jungle groups, and others. Peruvians use the term *chino* to refer to all Asian Peruvians, including Japanese and Polynesian as well as Chinese. It shouldn't be forgotten that immigrants from Europe and those brought by coercion from Africa also have diverse backgrounds. The mestizo population includes persons of mixed origin, but gradations of skin color and racial status destroy the pretensions of homogeneity that ideologies of mestizaje sometimes suggest.

Race, and its inevitable companion, class, are at the core of the persistent question of who is a limeño or limeña. Many people—including white *criollos* (people seen as eminently coastal rather than Andean),¹ Afro-Peruvians, and coastal mestizos—believe that they have greater rights to the city because their great-grandparents were born and grew up in what in colonial times was called "the City of Kings." This view questions the presence of the millions of Andean migrants and their descendants: they have come to the city since early colonial times, but their numbers have increased dramatically in the last few decades, and many of them maintain

2 Introduction

their native language and culture as well as strong ties to their towns of origin. Migrants would contend, on the other hand, that they are remaking the capital, adding the Quechua language, Andean food and music, and other customs to the urban sociocultural mix. The perception of Andean limeños as “new” immigrants is clearly false: although the number of Andean immigrants has skyrocketed in recent decades, this migration process began well before the twentieth century.

Lima is a city of contrasts. Class inequalities are immediately visible and frequently appalling, and juxtapositions and disparities stand out in daily life. As in other cities of Latin America, teeming shantytowns can be found on the hills above affluent neighborhoods with mansions. One of the most exclusive neighborhoods, Las Casuarinas, backs up to the much poorer Pampuna Alta (see color insert). While some districts enjoy nice streets, manicured gardens, and security guards, others lack basic services such as water and electricity. In recent decades class segregation has increased as the upper classes flock to the well-maintained districts to the east, having outgrown the traditional upper middle-class districts such as Miraflores and San Isidro. As perceptions about insecurity have grown, many areas—and not just those of the elite—have added gates to what were public streets, while a virtual apartheid reigns in the beaches of Asia to the south of Lima. Nonetheless, the search for any place to call home has led the poor to occupy areas near the affluent. Rich and poor and the light- and dark-skinned continue to mix.

Lima has grown so much that we could argue that there are many Limas today. In their introduction to a set of essays about twentieth-century Lima, Carlos Aguirre and Aldo Panfichi used the image of an archipelago to refer to the multiplicity of social, economic, and cultural spaces that, although sometimes physically segregated, are nonetheless connected in multiple ways.² There is the Lima of the *callejones*, where Afro-Peruvians and other members of the city’s lower orders created some of the city’s great musical traditions and where today large sectors of the urban working poor struggle to survive amid poverty and marginalization. There is of course the Lima of the few remaining majestic colonial mansions and the many churches, monasteries, convents, and chapels that still grace the historic downtown or *centro*. There is the Lima of middle-class chalets and Belle Époque buildings and streets, and the Miami-like suburbs where the wealthy and the superwealthy live. And there is the Andeanized Lima of *polladas* (fund-raising dining and drinking get-togethers), noisy and colorful weekend *chicha* or *huayno* concerts, and impressive economic vitality.

Lima is today a city of cities, a massive human and cultural entity

that is at once the continuation of its colonial roots and a completely new (re-)creation by present-day limeño/as. It is diverse and contrasting: it has always been. The debates that mark the city today, especially the question of who is a “true” limeño or limeña, date not from the second half of the twentieth century but from the city’s founding by the Spanish conqueror Francisco Pizarro in 1535. And although the city has changed drastically since the sixteenth century—the original city center grid now makes up about 5 percent of its full size—these glaring class inequities, rich racial mixing, and vibrant social life have marked the capital since its creation.

This reader seeks to provide a sample of Lima’s complex history—its glories and traditions, its pleasures and charms, as well as its old and new predicaments and tensions. We aim at offering a comprehensive and historically informed view of the city’s changing physical contours, its ever-shifting populations, and the competing mythologies and imaginaries created around all of them. We also highlight how different intellectuals (broadly defined) have attempted to address the ever-pressing question of where to locate Lima’s identity. Nostalgic traditionalists, critical intellectuals, travelers and scientists, poets and singers: all of them share a fascination with the city and have collectively and conflictually constructed the images of Lima. We hope to transmit to the readers our own fascination with Lima and to help them create their own understanding of the City of Kings.

The Lima Reader is roughly organized into chronological sections; except where specified, all endnotes are our own. We have sought to provide diverse texts but also accessible ones. We reluctantly left out many topics, authors, and episodes, characters, corners, or districts that deserve more attention simply due to the lack of space. Our emphasis has been to provide multiple, sometimes clashing viewpoints. The book’s organization reflects Lima’s long history and the contentious debates about its “soul” and future, controversies that date from the sixteenth century and continue today. For some, Lima is enjoying its finest moment, with new high-rise apartments, malls, and shopping areas popping up from north to south, not just in the affluent corridor near the ocean and to the east, and with the food boom attracting tourists and prompting culinary nationalism. For critics, the quality of life has actually declined with recent economic growth, due to torturous traffic, fewer and fewer parks and public spaces, growing inequality, distressing crime, the loss of historic monuments and buildings, and minimal or inefficient planning. We underline the historical roots of these tensions, but also incorporate another key aspect of the city: limeños’ sense of humor. Perhaps it’s safe to say that one thing will never change in



Modern Lima. Lima continues to extend into the desert and fields to the north and south and up the Andean foothills to the east. The old colonial center, *el centro*, now constitutes about 5 percent of the city. Map drawn by M. Roy Cartography.

Lima: the debates about the city's heart and soul, often conducted over a delicious meal.

The renowned poet Antonio Cisneros (1942–2012) had a clear favorite topic and inspiration: his hometown of Lima. In his aptly titled “Chronicle of Lima” (1968), which opens this book, he brings up his family's deep roots in the city, but also approaches it from many other perspectives. He alludes to its environment, the lack of trees and the corrosive humidity and fog, the often dried-up Rímac River, the Franciscans and the catacombs of their church. But he also underlines the massive presence of Andean immigrants in the shantytowns that surrounded the city, a transformation that, unlike many of the city's older residents, Cisneros embraced. We have included this poem here at the beginning because it provides such a sweeping view of Lima and alludes to themes present throughout the book: the resilience of pre-Columbian and colonial elements; the city's unique setting; and the ongoing Andeanization of the City of Kings.

The reiterated invocation of Hermelinda, in the epigraph and the poem, alludes to a romantic and very popular *vals* written by Alberto Condemarín in the 1920s, one that connects love, loss, and memory: just as Condemarín didn't want Hermelinda to forget him (she apparently did, as she married the famous composer and musician Felipe Pinglo), Cisneros did not want his beloved Lima to forget him. We are confident that the city has not.

Notes

1. The term *criollo* is used for both whites and Afro-Peruvians and also often connotes cunning, the ability to get around bureaucracy, court someone, or confront any challenge with charm and humor.
2. Carlos Aguirre and Aldo Panfichi, introduction to *Lima, siglo XX: Cultura, socialización y cambio* (Lima: Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 2013), 16.

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Pre-Hispanic, Conquest, and Early Colonial Lima

When Francisco Pizarro and his brothers in arms scouted areas in 1534 and early 1535 to establish a capital of Peru, they had the usual pragmatic concerns, above all securing sufficient water and agricultural land. Jauja in the central Andes had been an original favorite but was rejected, deemed too high and too distant from the Pacific Ocean. Instead, they selected a slightly inland spot along the Rímac River that could protect them from pirates yet lay on the coast, a good distance away from the center of the far-from-subjugated Inca Empire. On January 18, 1535, they laid out a classic Plaza Mayor just south of the river, with the state (what became the viceroy), the church, the municipality, and merchants occupying the four sides of the square and streets running from it at perfect right angles. It received two names, Lima and La Ciudad de los Reyes (The City of Kings). The first derived from a pre-Inca oracle in the valley, called Limaq (which also produced the name of the river and district, Rímac), and the second from the decision to found the city on January 6, the feast of the Epiphany or Three Kings Day. The Spanish believed that they had set in stone (and adobe) an enduring symbol of Spanish rule, one that would house the different components of the conquering Iberians and oversee the domination of the Incas and all of South America.

They succeeded yet created a city very different than the one they imagined. The symbolic power of the plaza and its environs glorified Spanish domination and created a hierarchical society overseen by an omnipresent Catholic Church. Lima and its port, Callao (which now run together as the Lima Metropolitan Area), served as the entrepôt between Europe and South America and continue to be the nation's gateway to the world. Nonetheless, the Spanish built atop an indigenous religious center and decades later added an "Indian quarters" to the eastern part of the city. Colonial Lima counted on a sizable indigenous population—artisans, merchants, servants, and members of the indigenous aristocracy—and today Lima has more Quechua speakers (the Inca language) than any city in the world, ap-

proximately half a million. The decision to build the capital far away from Cuzco in no way isolated Europeans from indigenous Peru. Furthermore, the number of mestizos, the offspring of Europeans and indigenous people, increased rapidly.

African slavery bolstered the plantation economy and shaped Lima. By the eighteenth century, some referred to Lima as a predominantly black (African, Afro-Peruvian, and mixed groups) conglomeration. Lima and its nearby port also attracted immigrants and travelers from Asia (the Philippines) and northern Europe (including Protestants and Jews, to the chagrin of the Inquisition). Their presence as well as the surging mixed-race population imploded the official division of Peru into two republics, one of Spaniards and one of indigenous people. It should not be forgotten that Spaniards themselves were far from unified: bloody civil wars among the conquistadors raged for decades after Lima's foundation.

The Catholic Church was a full partner in the establishment of Lima. With the arrival of the Inquisition in 1570 and the building of more than one hundred churches, parishes, monasteries, and prayer houses, particularly of the Mendicant Orders and the Jesuits, the spiritual and social order would seem to have been well guarded. Nonetheless, authorities rapidly complained about widespread disregard for laws that sought to bolster the city's racial and class hierarchies and to control questionable public behavior. They blamed just about everyone, depending on the point of view of the critic, of course: lower classes and elites, men and women. Lima was almost from the start both a highly pious and highly sinful city, part of the nature of baroque cities, as explored in several texts here.

The texts highlight the rich ritual and public life of Lima, particularly its religious processions and festivals. Other writers underline the rich spiritual life behind convent doors. Social relations remained fluid and can be read in different ways. More conservative interpretations stress a harmony among different racial groups built around the shared piety and the devotion to public rituals. Others would stress tensions, noting the uneasiness about possible uprisings among the indigenous in Lima and far beyond as well as concerns about slave resistance. Lima not only feared pirates and European marauders—it also dreaded subversion from within or potential attacks by rebels. The walls that surrounded it from the 1680s to the 1860s aimed to protect the City of Kings from foreign invaders and from invaders within Peru.

Pre-Hispanic Lima

César Pacheco Vélez

Pizarro and his band of conquistadors sought to establish Lima in an area free of indigenous settlements. Not only were they following Castilian policy (disregarded, clearly, by the imposition of “Mexico City” on top of Tenochtitlan), they also feared the Incas and suffered in the high altitude of the Andes. However, finding a suitable place with adequate water and shelter and with no indigenous settlements would prove impossible. Both the Incas and other previous and contemporary cultures had settled in the best valleys and river streams in the highlands and the coast. Lima could never escape its proximity to pre-Columbian settlements, sanctuaries, and peoples. Even today, more than fifty huacas or large monuments and shrines rise up throughout the city, and excavations continue to find buildings and other remains that predate the Spanish. The historian César Pacheco Vélez (1929–89) underlines Lima’s foundational ties to the indigenous people who not only surrounded it but also built it.

The Spanish Crown followed a policy—outlined in edicts by Charles V and Philip II—of not founding cities in the midst of preexistent native settlements. This is the case with the new capital of the kingdom of Peru. Chroniclers refer to the site where Pizarro founded the city on that pleasant January morning of 1535. But it so happens that this locale had an elusive, centuries- or millennia-long heritage, as some of the most ancient (over twelve thousand years old) human settlements known have been discovered in its vicinity. These include the ruins of Paraíso in the Chillón Valley, which was probably inhabited up to 4000 BC and constitutes one of the oldest stone monuments of the Western hemisphere; the settlements of Ancón, also ten thousand years old; Cajamarquilla, a pre-Inca village in the Rímac Valley, which was uninhabited when the conquistadors arrived; and the massive and densely populated sanctuary of Pachacamac in the Lurín Valley, which also represented the earliest sign of the region’s predestination to host the new capital. The Spanish also discovered numerous *huacas* or shrines between the hamlets of Limatambo, Armatambo, and Maranga. . . .

The region boasts abundant evidence of an uninterrupted human presence spanning centuries or millennia: it was the southernmost frontier during the Chavin Period; the northwestern reaches—but not quite the northernmost border—during the Wari Period; a clearly defined local culture during the Late Intermediate Period; and a region recently subjugated by the Incas around the time of the Spanish arrival. The pre-Hispanic ethnic groups of the central coast of modern-day Peru, specifically those concentrated in the valleys of Huaura, Chillón, Rímac, and Lurín, constitute a common entity with those of the highlands of Yauyos, Canta, and Huarochirí, suggesting that the arbitrary borders of the modern Department of Lima—disjointed in both its roads and its economy—respect the cultural identity forged in the first half of the sixteenth century, during which they adjusted to domination by the Inca and subsequently by the Spaniards.

The concrete jungle of the megalopolis now straddles the Chillón, Rímac, and Lurín Valleys of the central coast, the former homogeneous territory of a series of *señoríos* (lordships) and *kurakazgos*. These *señoríos* carved up the territory in a different pattern than the European one. Due to the importance of irrigation in their desert-based agricultural society—in which hydraulic techniques were the key to well-being—they rebuffed fixed borders and instead favored different types of access. In the lower course of the three rivers that seem to converge into what would later become Lima, irrigation ditches and floodgates bear witness to a pattern of settlement that is both clever and prolific. The Spanish came upon about twenty villages of potters and farmers and four fishermen's coves in the entire region. The central valley of Lima—or Rímac, following the pronunciation by highlanders—features the *señorío* of Sulco or Surco, with its villages of Armatambo and Guatca or Huatica; the *señorío* of Lima proper, with its village of Rimactambo or Limatambo; and the *señoríos* of Malanga or Maranga, Amancaes, and Collique, all of which were associated with or subordinated to the *señorío* of Ychma or Pachacamac, and in whose ceremonial center priests seemed to wield more power than any *kuraka* could. And it is through the *yunga* valleys that these pre-Inca *señoríos*—which remained mostly unaffected by Inca conquest—and their neighbors to the north and the highlands (toward Canta and Huaura) articulated the millennia-old bonds between highlands and lowlands. Their alleged antagonism is disproven by this centuries-old relationship.

The *yunga* *señoríos* that had been recently conquered by Cuzco were peppered with many hamlets or villages, full of millennial human remains, that could not be considered cities in the Western sense. The nucleus of the entire territory was religious in nature: Pachacamac. It was one of these